DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 373 468 EC 303 236

AUTHOR McLaughlin, Margaret J.; Warren, Sandra H.
TITLE Resource Implications of Inclusion: Impressions of Special Education Administrators at Selected Sites. Policy Paper Number 1.
INSTITUTION American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, CA. Center for Special Education Finance.
SPONS AGENCY Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Jun 94
CONTRACT H159G20002
NOTE 38p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Attitudes; *Disabilities; Educational Facilities; Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Equipment; Expenditures; Interviews; *Mainstreaming; Professional Development; *Program Costs; *Resource Allocation; School Personnel; Special Education; Staff Development; Staff Utilization; Transportation
IDENTIFIERS *Inclusive Schools

ABSTRACT

This study explored resource allocation issues in schools that had moved toward inclusive education. Rather than document or analyze actual costs, the study sought general information related to resource allocation through interviews with local special education administrators in 12 school districts across the United States. Specifically, the study obtained information related to: personnel (allocation of special education teachers, regular education class sizes, cross-funding of personnel, related service providers, and paraprofessionals); transportation; facilities; materials and equipment; and professional development. Findings of this exploratory study indicate that initial implementation of inclusion can require additional resources, but as a service delivery mode, inclusion appears to be less expensive than provision of services in cluster programs or specialized schools. An appendix lists and describes the school districts participating in interviews. (JDD)

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Resource Implications of Inclusion:

Impressions of Special Education Administrators at Selected Sites

Margaret J. McLaughlin
Sandra H. Warren

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Policy Paper Number 1

Center for Special Education Finance

Prepared under a Cooperative Agreement from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs

EC 303236

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Center for Special Education Finance
Policy Paper Number 1
June 1994

The Center for Special Education Finance (CSEF) is supported through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (H159G20002). Points of view or opinions expressed in this paper do not necessarily represent the official agency positions of the U.S. Department of Education or our network of advisors and professional organizations.

The Center for Special Education Finance (CSEF) was established in October 1992 to address a comprehensive set of fiscal issues related to the delivery and support of special education services to children throughout the U.S. The Center's mission is to provide information needed by policymakers to make informed decisions regarding the provision of services to children with disabilities, and to provide opportunities for information sharing regarding critical fiscal policy issues.

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Acknowledgments

The Center for Special Education Finance (CSEF) wishes to thank Margaret J. McLaughlin and Sandra H. Warren, Institute for the Study of Exceptional Children and Youth, University of Maryland at College Park, for preparing this paper. We appreciate the contributions of our advisors, John Heskett, Robert Van Dyke, and Edward (Lee) Vargas, who reviewed and provided valuable input to the final product; as well as the ongoing support of Scott Brown and Lou Danielson at the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Special thanks also go to CSEF staff members who reviewed this paper, including Jean Wolman, Manager of Dissemination, for editorial and coordination support, and Debra Naeve for art direction and cover photograph of students in the San Jose Unified School District, CA.

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Abstract

Throughout the United States, local schools and school districts are moving toward implementation of inclusive education. As part of this implementation, discussions are taking place concerning a number of issues surrounding inclusion. These include philosophical foundations, instructional strategies, staffing patterns and roles, and student eligibility decisions. However, among the issues frequently brought to the fore by educational administrators are those that relate to the allocation of fiscal resources. Specifically, the question often asked is, "Does inclusion cost more or less than what we are doing now?"

This study was a preliminary investigation that attempted to explore some of the issues related to resource allocation in sites that had moved toward inclusive education. The study did not attempt to document or analyze actual costs. Rather, it sought general information related to resource allocation, through interviews with administrators in 12 school districts across the United States. Specifically, the study obtained information related to staffing, transportation, facilities, equipment, and professional development, and how expenditures in those areas had changed as inclusion was implemented. Results of interviews provide some insight into what resources are impacted when a school district moves to inclusion and the cost implications of those changes. This study is the beginning of a more comprehensive, in-depth effort by the Center for Special Education Finance (CSEF) to collect and analyze data on the actual costs of inclusion.

I. Inclusion - An Overview

"Inclusion" is a concept that is sweeping special education programs across the country. It is typified by a student's full participation in a regular education class with "ownership" of that student shared by both regular and special educators (Sailor, Gee, & Karasoff, 1993). However, the implementation can vary widely, from a student having a homeroom assignment in a regular education classroom with some pull-out instruction for specialized skills, to full-time participation in a regular education classroom with instructional support provided on an as-needed basis. While such practice is commonly referred to as inclusive education, it may also be called supportive education or heterogeneous education (National Association of State Boards of Education, 1992; Villa, Thousand, Stainback, & Stainback, 1992).

During 1991-1992, the Center for Policy Options in Special Education at the University of Maryland investigated 47 local school districts involved in restructuring. A number of critical features associated with restructuring were identified including the degree to which special education programs were being redefined. Two major types of special education restructuring emerged: the "Heterogeneous Neighborhood School" and the "Unified System" (McLaughlin & Warren, 1992). The "Heterogeneous Neighborhood School" favors inclusion of individual students with severe disabilities into regular instructional settings in neighborhood home schools, while maintaining the basic structures and organization of special education. The "Unified System" embraces the concept of inclusion, but goes further in articulating a set of strategies that create a "seamless service system" that can respond to the needs of any student more efficiently and in a more integrated way. The very nature of the "Unified System" enables a school district and local schools to take a holistic approach in budgeting, eligibility, and instructional delivery—thus eliminating the maze of categorical programs.

Central to both approaches is a change in the way funds and other resources are used to support the education of students with disabilities. Virtually all administrators who were interviewed during the initial investigation cited the restrictiveness of funding formulae, as well as other regulations concerning transportation, certification of personnel, and assessment and identification of eligible students as barriers to implementing more inclusive or unified schools.

Several issues emerge specific to the inclusion of students with disabilities. One central issue is the identification of students to be included. Much of the discussion surrounding inclusion has focused on students with mental retardation and other severe physical and/or cognitive disabilities. These students have consistently been served in the most segregated or separate programs (Davis, 1992), frequently in special schools or clustered in special classes or wings within certain regular school buildings. The concept of inclusion has been less uniformly applied to students with severe emotional disorders, another population that is educated within segregated programs. The investigations of the Center for Policy Options in Special Education found that districts involved in inclusion were typically focusing on all students not currently served in their home schools.

Another issue related to inclusion concerns how to provide instructional support to a relatively small number of students who are moved from classrooms or district programs with high staff ratios and levels of services into disparate regular education schools where the staff and services can be diluted. There are concerns that students will not receive the same level of direct specialized instruction or other services that they might have in more tailored programs. Also central to this discussion is the nature of the program outcomes for students who are being educated with non-disabled peers. Enhanced communication and socialization are frequently cited as primary goals for inclusion of students. This is not to say that specific skills and competencies are not important, only that they should receive no more focus than building relationships among different students and creating environments that support diversity.

Finally, there is also fear that inclusion could be used as a means to save money at the expense of students in need of specialized educational services. In particular, concerns have been raised that special education teaching

positions may be reduced as students move into integrated classrooms, or that the entire inclusion movement is designed to save transportation costs. While inclusion has been extensively discussed in the literature, information is notably absent regarding the allocation of resources or how those allocations change as a result of moving to inclusion. The remainder of this paper focuses on a study undertaken to address these resource allocation issues.

II. Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this investigation was to explore the use of specific resources in local school districts and individual schools that were actively involved in implementing inclusion (i.e., districts involved in bringing students served in segregated special schools or cluster programs back into their home or neighborhood schools). Interestingly, most districts were focusing their inclusion efforts on students with severe cognitive disabilities, or physical and multiple disabilities. Several districts had previously instituted some merger of special and general education programs to promote inclusion of students with milder disabilities, including learning disabilities. However, those students with milder disabilities did not appear to be a focus of inclusion efforts under this study.

The investigation did not specifically target districts that were attempting to "unify" or merge categorical programs. However, several of the sites included in this investigation were implementing those programs as well. Another interesting trend was that almost all of the district representatives who were interviewed tended to separate the two initiatives. Inclusion referred to bringing students with severe disabilities into regular school buildings and classrooms, while attempts to merge programs were viewed as initiatives for students with mild disabilities.

It is important to note that this study was exploratory in nature. Inclusion is often viewed as a relatively new phenomenon nationwide. However, the concept of educating students with disabilities is deeply rooted in the *Least Restrictive Environment* provision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Nonetheless, planning and implementation of inclusion had been underway for only about two to three years in the schools and districts involved in this investigation. Therefore, the costs incurred largely represent start-up costs and, most likely, some experimental or prototype development

activities that might not be maintained when the districts move to institutionalize full-scale efforts. Most individuals were not certain what level of resources, such as instructional assistants or special transportation, may need to be maintained over time.

This investigation, therefore, was viewed as only a beginning step in understanding the cost implications of inclusion. Given the early stage of development of inclusive schools, as well as the exploratory nature of the interviews conducted, one can only begin to identify the resources that are impacted by inclusion and gain some general understanding about how district budgets might be affected.

III. Method

Interviews with school district staff provided the information for this study. School districts and individual schools were selected for interviews based on their strong efforts to implement inclusion. That is, sites were specifically selected that were known to be actively involved in implementing some model of inclusion for students with severe disabilities. In addition, sites were selected to represent urban, rural, and suburban districts in various regions of the country, as well as individual schools implementing inclusion that were not necessarily supported by a districtwide initiative.

About half of the districts selected for interviews had been involved in the investigations of district restructuring conducted during 1991-92 by the Center for Policy Options in Special Education at the University of Maryland. Other districts were selected to reflect regional or demographic features and were recommended by the Council for Administrators of Special Education (CASE).

A total of 14 interviews were conducted, representing 12 school districts. In all but four instances, inclusion had become a districtwide initiative; and interviews were conducted with the local special education administrator. Three interviews were conducted with principals of local schools that had opted to implement an inclusive model in their buildings even though the district was not specifically moving toward inclusion. Additional interviews were conducted with two university researchers. One researcher was evaluating inclusion in an elementary school within a district in the process of implementing inclusion systemwide. The other individual was providing workshops and technical assistance to local school district administrators as they moved toward inclusion. (See *Appendix* for brief sketches of the districts or schools involved in interviews.)

In almost every instance, the person interviewed had initiated the move toward inclusion and was very committed to the concept. All administrators interviewed also appeared to be very well informed about resource issues and frequently referred to their budgets to provide information. This was probably due in part to the fact that when the interviews were scheduled, individuals were told what areas were of interest and what types of questions would be asked. They were also told that actual expenditures in dollars would not be required. No attempts were made to verify information at the building levels nor to obtain substantiating documents.

All but one interview were conducted by telephone during the summer of 1993. One interview was conducted on site because the interviewer was visiting the school on other business. Interviews averaged slightly less than one hour. They began with a description of the current special education program and a history of how the district had begun its current effort to create inclusive schools. Specific inquiries regarding resource allocations focused on the following areas: personnel, transportation, facilities, materials and equipment, and professional development. The following section discusses findings, organized according to these categories.

IV. Findings

Personnel

When the delivery of special education services changes from a more separate, categorical model to inclusion, substantial changes appear to occur in the ways special education personnel are allocated and used. Teachers who formerly had self-contained classrooms and were responsible for the development and implementation of a limited number of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) must change roles to accommodate the new ways and places in which students with disabilities are now educated. These self-contained positions are converted to consultants, support facilitators, inclusion specialists, and similar positions. The predominant responsibilities of the individuals change from directly providing instruction to students to interacting with other teachers and specialists, and directing the activities of teaching assistants or aides. The adapted functions of the special educator position usually include leading the development of IEPs, providing case management services, and supporting regular classroom teachers in the implementation of students' IEPs. This might include adapting existing curricula or modifying activities to include the disabled student, trouble-shooting, and generally monitoring and supervising the progress of the students with disabilities in various classrooms. In addition, some teachers may provide a limited amount of direct instruction to individual students. The goal, however, is to shift all or a large part of that responsibility to the regular classroom teacher.

■ Allocation of Special Education Teachers

There was relatively little change in the numbers of professional special education personnel in districts implementing inclusion. Two districts, both

relatively affluent suburban districts with strong commitments to inclusion, did add professional personnel. In the Fayetteville-Manlius School District (NY), which will move to a home school model in 1994, one special education teacher will be hired at the elementary level so that there will be five full-time equivalent (FTE) special educators serving three schools. At least one additional .50 FTE special education teacher will be needed at the middle school to serve the anticipated students.

In the Indian Prairie School District (IL), the inclusion model called for each elementary school to have a full-time resource teacher, a full-time speech and language therapist, a .50 FTE psychologist, and a .50 FTE remedial reading teacher. Two new psychologists were hired to meet this ratio. (This district also built two new elementary schools during this time, so it is likely that one new psychologist might have been needed anyway to maintain the prior level of services.)

Only one site, the Lake Washington School District (WA), actually reported a loss of a professional staff position. This occurred when one school opted to convert one professional FTE to 2.5 instructional assistants because the remaining special educator in the building was able to provide the necessary consultant support and supervision.

All other persons interviewed felt that they needed every special educator position, but these personnel had to be used differently. For example, the nine self-contained classroom teaching positions in Indian Prairie became "Support Facilitators," and one was assigned to each building. (Actually two new facilitators were hired because two new elementary schools opened.) Six of the 11 Support Facilitators were former special education self-contained classroom teachers; however, three of the teachers felt that they could not make the change and moved to other districts as self-contained special education teachers.

In the Montgomery County School District (VA), special education teachers are assigned to grade-level teams. Because Virginia is a categorical state, a waiver was obtained from the State Education Agency (SEA) to permit special education teachers to provide special education services to students outside of the teachers' certification areas. However, IEP case management for an individual student remained the responsibility of a special education teacher

in the school who is certified in the student's disability. Special education self-contained classroom teaching positions in excess of what was needed at the school level were converted to itinerant "inclusion specialists" who serve on planning and support teams for students with moderate and severe disabilities.

As noted earlier, these former self-contained classroom teachers spend the majority of their time interacting with adults, although some still provide limited direct instruction to individual students as needed. While some teachers could not make the switch from the autonomy of having "their own classroom" to interacting with adults, others reportedly see the change as advantageous. In particular, in larger schools with multiple special education teachers, almost all districts have established grade-level teams. Special education teachers serve as team members and co-teach, consult with, and otherwise relate to a limited number of teachers at a specific grade level. In one example, a middle school of over 1,000 students had 40 regular education faculty, one resource room teacher, and nine self-contained special education classroom teachers. The resource room teacher had to relate to all 40 staff; however, now she is part of a specific grade-level team along with the other nine special education teachers.

At the high school level there is still a community-based vocational program in virtually all of the districts. Students with disabilities in these programs are supervised and supported by special education staff. In some districts, when the students are back in the high school, they may spend varying amounts of time in regular classrooms, but inclusion is less well-defined at the high school level. As one director said, "I'm still waiting for someone to show me how to do it right."

Interestingly, in about half of the interview sites, there had been little restructuring of the roles and responsibilities of resource room teachers of students with mild disabilities. By and large, these teachers continued to serve students in pull-out programs for varying time periods during the day. When asked why these positions had not been changed, the general response was that the first priority had been to include students with moderate and severe disabilities and that the district would then "look at" the resource room models. In New Mexico and some districts in Vermont, however, the resource room teachers had already been converted to consultant teachers

some years ago. Also, in one of the Maryland sites the inclusion model included only students with mild to moderate disabilities, and all former resource room and self-contained classroom teachers co-taught with regular education peers in grade level teams.

■ Regular Education Class Sizes

Teacher/student ratios in both regular and special education classes are regulated by district and state-level policy as well as teacher contractual agreements. The allocation of regular education teachers to a building is based on those ratios, which are impacted when students with disabilities are included in those classes. In the Chicago Public Schools, with many class sizes at the maximum, some schools have had to merge two classes—a regular education elementary class with a 1:28 ratio and a special education class with 10 students, a teacher, and an aide. This results in a ratio of 3:38, which is within the prescribed limits. However, students with disabilities are still disproportionately overrepresented within those classes.

In the Lake Washington School District, when class sizes increased and additional regular education FTE was required, the district special education levy supplemented the regular education personnel budget. The Lake Washington special education director believes that his district spends no more overall than neighboring districts that are maintaining cluster or special programs, but some of the Lake Washington local special education dollars are being spent on regular education teachers.

■ Cross-Funding of Personnel

A related issue is the cross-funding of special education teachers to permit them to work with both regular and special education students. In both the Weld County (CO) and Lake Washington School Districts, special education teacher positions were funded jointly from special education, local, and state Chapter I budgets, allowing these teachers to instruct a variety of students. In one school in New Mexico, the district has almost merged a Head Start program in a K-1 school that includes a special education preschool program. Teaching staff are paid from both Head Start and local public school accounts, but IDEA funds are used to add an instructional assistant. The Title VII program supports four instructional assistants in the school. The Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union District (VT) is establishing "Learning

Centers" with blended Chapter I, special education, and other local funds, to provide intensive support to groups of students who need some specialized instruction. Most of the support is targeted on non-readers and is described as "an alternative to the regular classroom with a broader resource room concept." This blending of funds across programs was cited as necessary to create the truly inclusive school, as well as to foster true collaboration.

■ Related Service Providers

In almost all sites, related service providers maintained current case loads, but provided services either through consultation to teachers or directly in classrooms. There was limited pull-out or separate instruction. The exception seemed to be some individual students who required physical therapy and speech articulation therapy. Only one district reported increases in the numbers of related service personnel; and that was the Indian Prairie School District, which increased the numbers of psychologists.

■ Paraprofessionals

In inclusive schools, paraprofessionals (also called aides and instructional assistants) have increased responsibilities that include much more direct support to and instruction of individual students in regular classrooms. These changes in roles and responsibilities have resulted in changes in the allocation of personnel—most notably an increase in the number of paraprofessionals providing direct instructional support. In almost every site, there has been a sizable increase in the numbers of these individuals. For example, in the Fayetteville-Manlius School District, the budget line for teaching assistants increased by a third between the first and second year of implementing full inclusion. One paraprofessional was added for every two students with multiple and severe disabilities. In the Indian Prairie School District, 38 new paraprofessionals were added over a two-year period for a total of 90, 65 of whom serve students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms in 11 elementary schools and 1 middle school. The South Burlington School District (VT) had seven paraprofessionals five years ago and now has 50, due in part to the SEA policy of hiring one paraprofessional for each severely disabled student. The SEA also supports part of the costs of aides for students with milder disabilities. These paraprofessionals are assigned to individual students, but their use within schools is not specifically monitored.

A university researcher, who has worked in a number of school districts in the Midwest, reported several districts in Indiana where there were "2-3 percent" increases in special education personnel due to hiring of paraprofessionals.

The Weld County School District also increased the number of paraprofessionals, who are assigned to individual buildings, not classrooms, based on a matrix that includes the total number of students in a building and the severity levels of the students' disabilities. In addition, the district maintains a small pool of paraprofessionals, who are deployed to individual schools for unexpected needs, such as the arrival of a new student.

Not all districts experienced such a substantial increase in the numbers of paraprofessionals. For example, as noted earlier, one school in the Lake Washington School District added several paraprofessionals; however, these individuals represented a conversion of one FTE of a professional.

In the individual school sites, as well as one or two of the remaining districts, no new staff were added. Schools were given personnel allocations based on population of students with disabilities in accordance with SEA funding policies on class size ratios. Thereafter, individual schools had the flexibility to utilize the skills of the paraprofessionals as appropriate.

Paraprofessionals are used in various ways, but usually provide direct support and instruction to students in regular classrooms. Services may include such things as toileting or positioning, implementing a program of behavior management, providing direct instruction in specific skill areas, as well as conducting group lessons or activities for heterogeneous instructional groups of students. The professional special educator, acting as a consultant, is always designated as the supervisor for the paraprofessionals. In Vermont, this increased responsibility has become a concern for the teachers' union, which takes the view that an increase in compensation is warranted.

The increased use of paraprofessionals was viewed by several special education directors as a temporary phenomenon. They see teachers requesting less aide time as their confidence grows. As one director stated, "Teachers new to inclusion frequently ask for an aide; the old pros say they don't need or want one!"

■ Summary

In summary, numbers of instructional personnel increased in almost every district, primarily due to the increased number of paraprofessionals hired to support students with disabilities within regular classrooms. Virtually no sites reported a decrease in professional staff, and only in limited sites were professional staff added. The primary change was in redefining roles and responsibilities of existing personnel.

Transportation

The impact of inclusion on special transportation arrangements appears to vary and depends on the individual student's disabilities; how rural the school district is; and, of course, whether the inclusion is returning students to their home schools. Four districts reported definite cost savings in transportation as a result of moving to inclusion. In Weld County, Montgomery County, Indian Prairie, and the Chicago Public Schools, transportation costs decreased as students either walked to their neighborhood schools or rode the regular school buses. The Indian Prairie School District used to transport their students to cooperative programs, and the other districts clustered their students in one or two schools. The Weld County administrator reported that three years ago over 300 students with disabilities were on special education routes compared to only 126 who currently need specialized transportation. In each of the four districts, decreases in specialized transportation also resulted in decreased use of special bus aides. This can vary, however, as aides are still placed on many regular buses. As noted by the Weld County special education administrators, many bus drivers need training in how to work through a problem with a special education student instead of requesting special transportation. Even within districts that experienced significant decreases in the use of special transportation, special lift-equipped buses and door-to-door transportation are used for individual students who need it. However, these arrangements are now determined on an individual basis and not automatically required for a student. An example of this individualized approach to transportation is a student in Chicago who uses a wheelchair and walks to school with his siblings, except during the winter months when his mother has requested that he gets door-to-door transportation.

In both rural Vermont and New Mexico, almost all students are bused to school, and there can be large distances between where students live and the schools they attend. Thus, when a child with special transportation needs (e.g., a lift-equipped bus) moves into the district and goes to the home school, a new bus may be required because one bus cannot possibly pick up two children and go to two schools with the same starting times. In Rutland, Vermont, most students with severe disabilities were formerly transported to programs in New York; the cost savings in not providing long-distance transportation for several children will offset the purchase of a new bus. The Fayetteville-Manlius School District has had to retrofit an existing bus with a lift, at the cost of $50,000, in order to have two lift-equipped buses that are currently required to transport students to their home schools. This district's director also notes that more lift-equipped buses could be needed in the future depending on the specific children who might enter the district and where they reside.

The Lake Washington School District administrator estimates that there has been some cost savings in transportation, but assessing the savings is "tricky." The state reimburses special education transportation based on the cost of the transportation (e.g., if one student rides the bus, the bus costs are totally reimbursed). This reimbursement only occurs when the student is using specialized transportation and no non-disabled students are using those buses. Regular transportation reimbursement is based on a fixed amount per student. As special education students move onto those regular buses, they also move onto a different fee schedule. If the district equips a regular bus with a lift so that students may go on field trips together, the number of seats on the bus is reduced. Consequently, fewer students can ride the bus, and the amount of reimbursement decreases.

■ Summary

Some initial increases in the costs of transporting students with disabilities to their neighborhood schools may occur as districts purchase lift-equipped buses or modify existing ones. However, these increases appear to be offset over time by decreased use of special door-to-door transportation and the use of special bus aides. In addition, the time that students with disabilities spend on buses is significantly reduced as they move to their neighborhood schools.

Facilities

Physical plant modifications play an important role in bringing about an inclusive school. This is particularly true when students have mobility impairments. Most administrators stated that their schools were "by and large" accessible. However, two directors pointed out that most schools that had been built to code are not truly accessible, since most accessibility codes are for adults rather than children. This has required additional renovations to make the buildings "functionally accessible" for individual students.

The majority of school districts have made renovations on an as-needed basis in individual schools to meet the specific needs of individual students. The most frequent types of renovations have included increasing the size of restrooms, cutting curbs, and installing ramps. Some schools have also added special lifts to give students access to upper levels. Expenses for these renovations were typically covered by capital expenditures; district-targeted funds to implement the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); or, in the case of Vermont, "extraordinary cost" special education funds provided by the SEA. The Ruidoso School District (NM) is fortunate to benefit from an equalized state funding system, along with strong local support for building bond initiatives to fund such renovations.

Three administrators reported that when students with physical disabilities need to get to upper floors of schools, physical plant staff carry them up and down the stairs. In one Chicago school, a stairwell lift was installed for use initially by only two students; however it would permit five to six students with mobility impairments to use the school in the near future. More often, if districts were unable to afford costly renovations, a class with a mobility impaired student would be located on the first floor, along with all the other classes at that grade level.

The Indian Prairie School District has ensured that all new buildings are accessible, and elevators are being added to older buildings. On an interim basis, the classroom of a child with mobility impairments would be on the lower level of the school. Grades move to that level to stay with the student (e.g., when the child was in second grade, all second grade classes were on the first floor).

The Lake Washington School District has invested significant funds ($40,000-$100,000 per school) to make buildings "functionally accessible." Such renovations have included creating bathrooms large enough to catheterize students, providing drinking fountains low enough for children, and installing washers and dryers. These modifications are based on a student-by-student need, as well as a philosophy of general "accessibility." They are paid for with district facilities money. A bond issue will be held next year to cover costs of such renovations in all schools.

Increased space is also a critical issue for teachers and administrators. Two administrators spoke of the need for more "group space" for teachers to work together. This concept of collaboration was not considered in the original school designs, resulting in the lack of sufficient, appropriate work space for teachers.

Principals in Prince George's County and Montgomery County School Districts (MD) have established inclusive schools in open-space buildings. This type of structure was viewed as enhancing opportunities for collaboration among teachers and students.

■ Summary

In general, most older school buildings are not accessible for students with mobility impairments, and school districts face significant costs in renovating those buildings. The degree to which a district commits to expensive renovations seems related to the general wealth and commitment of the district, with less affluent districts opting for interim solutions of moving classrooms to the ground level of a building. Ultimately, however, most of those interviewed believe that buildings will have to become accessible in order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Materials and Equipment

In districts where inclusion was becoming the policy, there was a need to duplicate some adaptive equipment (e.g., trunk standers, positioning boards, specialized chairs and other mobility devices, computers) in order for individual schools to be properly equipped. In the Indian Prairie School District, the initial equipment costs were high because the district pulled out of a cooperative that had purchased all of the specialized equipment for

students, and had to start from scratch equipping its schools. The Lake Washington School District invested about $30,000 in adaptive equipment and computers to ensure that every school was at least minimally prepared for any student who might enroll. Some of these costs were required to purchase duplicates of equipment for individual schools. Prior to the move to a home school model, several students were able to share certain equipment. The director of the Fayetteville-Manlius School District estimated that each school spent about $1,000-1,500 for some new equipment. However, the largest equipment costs were associated with specific assistive technologies and augmentative communication systems that were purchased for individual students; this equipment would follow those students into their new schools.

Interestingly, the Montgomery County School District administrator reported that special education spending for materials and equipment had actually decreased with the move to inclusion. He attributed this primarily to teachers relying less on the special education materials catalogs for purchasing curriculum materials; they now are using and adapting the school district's regular curricular materials. Also, the teachers were successfully using equipment, including computers and specific software, purchased from regular education catalogs, which were less expensive than those in the specialized catalogs. Once teachers learned that special education materials have no mystique, they became more confident and less reliant on specialized materials. No changes in equipment or supplies were reported in any of the individual schools implementing inclusion models.

■ Summary

As in a number of other areas, some equipment and materials costs were associated with the movement toward inclusion. However, most of these costs appear to be one-time, start-up costs required to equip local school buildings as opposed to one cluster school or special center. In addition, often the specialized equipment is needed by an individual student during an entire school day, and duplicate equipment will be necessary regardless of where a student is placed. However, once duplicate sets of equipment are available, they can be moved around schools if necessary and do not need to be purchased again except to upgrade or change the equipment. Furthermore, for some equipment, such as that used by occupational and

physical therapists, replacement costs might be lower since fewer students will be using any given piece of equipment.

Professional Development

All of the districts represented in the interviews invested heavily in professional development. Typically, efforts to develop teachers' skills and change staff attitudes began prior to the actual movement of students. Activities included workshops, seminars, and, when feasible, site visits to inclusion sites in other districts. Most professional development activities were supported with funds from several sources, in large part because there were insufficient district funds allocated for professional development on any topic. However, in some districts where there was strong support on the part of the local School Board, there was a one-time infusion of money for professional development.

For example, in the Weld County School District, the board approved $25,000 in new funding to support professional development targeted at inclusion. In the Fayetteville-Manlius School District, the district budget earmarked $10,000 to provide professional development in the schools focused on inclusion. Each Indian Prairie building principal was given the resources to hire the equivalent of one FTE substitute each week to support professional development directed toward inclusion. These funds could be used to provide release time for teachers or for other professional development costs.

Often, school districts needed to piece together funds to support increased professional development. Examples of mixed funding for professional development included the Lake Washington and Ruidoso School Districts. To support activities, these districts used a number of resources, such as their operational budgets, IDEA dollars, Chapter II dollars, and special grants from their SEAs. In the Lake Washington School District, central office staff do "inclusion awareness" presentations in each school building. Individual schools can also apply for small grants (typically around $500) to develop their own staff development program focused on inclusion.

Perhaps the most extensive support for professional development was reported in Vermont, where "I-Teams," or interdisciplinary teams, have been established regionally with SEA support to provide assistance to local districts

as they move toward inclusion. The "I-Team" is composed of educators, psychologists, related service personnel, and parents who can consult with individuals in a district, develop specific educational plans for students, and also provide crisis management in specific instances.

Also in Vermont, districts may access the "extraordinary funds" pool for staff development, if that is necessary to bring a student back into the local school. The "extraordinary funds" pool is part of the funding structure through which Vermont provides special education funds to districts. There are basically three mechanisms for funding special education in Vermont: (a) a block of funds that is based on average daily attendance; (b) intensive funds that require the district to document all expenses associated with delivering special education services and then are reimbursed based on district wealth; and (c) extraordinary funds where a district pays the first $12,000 and the state reimburses 90 percent of all costs above that level. The latter can only be accessed for high cost services or other individual or unusual costs; these funds are not used to support basic special education instruction.

Most of the costs of professional development were reportedly associated with hiring substitute teachers to provide release time for teachers. Some districts did conduct institutes and workshops during the summer, and participating teachers received stipends. Some funds were also used to support travel to other sites. There was only limited use of outside consultants to provide staff development; most districts relied heavily on their own teachers and parents to provide staff development. It is important to note that the professional development activities within the various districts included both regular and special education teachers *and* instructional assistants. Some topics, such as facilitated communication or "circle of friends," might include only special educators. However, there was a real attempt to train special and regular educators together, including imbedding issues related to inclusion into other district professional development activities.

The need to conduct specialized training for instructional assistants was a new focus for most districts. Such training is seen as critical in light of the enhanced roles instructional assistants have in supporting individual students with disabilities in inclusive settings. Staff development for instructional assistants was done both separately and in conjunction with training for other

staff. Prior to inclusion, most districts had not provided much, if any, specific training to these staff.

While all of those interviewed cited the need to provide time for teachers to collaborate and share strategies, as well as to participate in formal professional development activities, some directors felt that their districts may have spent more resources on professional development than necessary. For example, two districts had placed a great deal of emphasis on educating the entire school system and community about inclusion. This included conducting needs assessments among teachers and structuring staff development activities that could help build skills and understanding of students with severe disabilities, before the students arrived. In both instances, inclusion plans stalled because teachers became increasingly anxious about what they would be expected to do before having direct experience with the students themselves. Staff in these two districts, as well as other districts, felt that the intensive professional development and ongoing support should be provided in the context of serving a specific student. That is, as teachers came to know the students, they were better able to use their new knowledge, and their anxiety dissipated.

■ Summary

All districts are expending more dollars on professional development to prepare staff for inclusion. As discussed earlier, many of the increased costs associated with inclusion—most notably transportation and facilities—are seen as one-time start-up costs and not necessarily costs that will continue at the same level as a core of staff within school buildings gain confidence and experience in working with students with disabilities. However, in order for inclusion to work, teachers will consistently need an opportunity to talk with one another, problem solve, share strategies, and jointly plan instruction for individual students. This will require time that will need to be structured both through the use of more flexible schedules during the school day, and perhaps through periodic release time that may require substitutes or other external assistance.

Other Observations

Several other issues that have resource implications emerged during the conversations in some districts. Perhaps of most significance is what some administrators perceived as a change in the relationship between parents of students with disabilities and the school system from one that is adversarial to one that is more trusting and collaborative. This has resulted, in at least two instances, in noticeable decreases in due process actions. The majority of the directors indicated that their districts were not particularly litigious and had few hearings over the past years. Yet, even in those districts, some parents had expressed a greater connection to the teachers and instructional program. This connection resulted when parents interacted with individual school staff and their child was one of only a few students with disabilities, compared to interacting with a school for students with disabilities where their child was one of many. This reportedly resulted in a more trusting relationship and less conflict between the school district and parents.

Another observation that has cost implications is the degree to which the inclusion activities were related to larger school restructuring efforts, which reportedly were occurring in almost a third of the districts investigated. In those districts, other special programs, such as Chapter I, bilingual education, or Head Start, were being restructured, and resources and services were being blended with special education. Nonetheless, it was more likely that inclusion was a central yet isolated focus within a district, and that the inclusion initiatives were targeted on students with severe disabilities. While almost all districts were making or thinking about some changes to programs for students with mild disabilities, such as encouraging more consultation and less pull-out instruction, the degree to which those programs were being systematically restructured varied. In addition, in two SEAs that had reportedly moved all resource room teachers to a consultant model "several years ago," there had not been the same level of professional development or preparation that was now being undertaken for inclusion of students with more severe disabilities.

V. Summary and Conclusions

Does inclusion cost more? This exploratory study was primarily designed to identify key resources that are impacted when a district moves to inclusion. As noted earlier, a more detailed and exacting cost analysis of inclusion will be conducted by the Center for Special Education Finance (CSEF). Nonetheless, this investigation suggests that initial implementation of inclusion can require additional resources. Whether those costs entail new expenditures to renovate buildings or hire new instructional assistants, or represent a reallocation of existing funds, from tuition to staff development, is not answered in this preliminary study. Obviously, start-up costs are associated with inclusion, and a move toward inclusion appears to put increased demands on district special education and general operational budgets, as districts build the capacity of individual schools to serve students with multiple and severe disabilities.

Does inclusion cost more relative to other modes of service delivery? Most likely not. When the costs of providing services in home schools are examined *relative* to the costs of transportation and educational services in cluster programs or specialized schools, inclusion appears to be less expensive. However, in order for districts to recognize these savings, dollars would need to follow the student into the new program.

An example of such cost savings occurred in the Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union in Vermont. The director of Rutland's special education program cited two elementary age students with severe disabilities, who had been enrolled in special day schools in the region and had been transported each day to the schools. The district had been expending $86,000 for tuition and transportation for both students. When these students were returned to their home schools, the district provided ongoing behavior management consultation (through an external consultant), hired two instructional

assistants (one for each student), purchased computers for each child, and sent a team of teachers from each school to a one-week institute at the University of Vermont to help them develop instructional plans for the students. The cost for these services was $65,000, representing a savings of $21,000. This full amount did not transfer directly into the district's budget. Due to the extraordinary cost formula used in Vermont, 90 percent of the savings returned to the SEA, and the district realized a 10 percent savings.

The Indian Prairie School District also brought "home" students who were being served out of district in a regional cooperative program that was funded separately by the SEA. Because the district withdrew from the cooperative, all federal and state funds directed at students with disabilities came to the district.

Transportation is one area where districts may recognize significant cost savings over time. As more and more students are able to either walk or use the regular school buses to get to their neighborhood schools, the number of routes, buses, and miles of specialized transportation will decrease. These savings can be significant. The calculated costs for special transportation during the 1991-92 school year exceeded the entire Part B appropriation for that period (L. Danielson, personal communication, August 30, 1993).

If the transportation savings can be applied in part to other budget lines, such as personnel or staff development, a district will be more adequately able to support the instruction of individual students with disabilities in regular schools. However, if the district is not committed to inclusion, but only to saving money, the savings in transportation may be used to supplement a general operating budget or offset deficits.

There will likely be some increase in personnel, even over the long term, with a move toward inclusion. The increases will be primarily in the area of paraprofessionals since additional classroom-based support is likely to be necessary for some students. While there was really no indication that professional FTE would be increased, there was also no indication that there would be any decreases (such as using aides instead of teachers). However, most of those interviewed were district-level administrators, and personnel decisions and allocations of personnel are increasingly made at the building level. Thus, it would be informative to obtain the perceptions of principals

regarding how much flexibility they have in reducing professional staff, such as special education teachers. It is unlikely that building principals would want to reduce professional staff; however, it is also likely that the configuration of special education staff (e.g., student/staff ratios, types of positions) is determined by the central office model for delivering special education services and/or state special education regulations. This was certainly the case in the individual schools, where principals stated that they had autonomy regarding how they used existing staff, but were bound by district and state policies that determined the allocations and qualifications of special education teachers in their buildings.

It is important to remember that none of the sites providing information for this investigation were involved in inclusion to save money. Each site was committed to providing high quality education to each student with a disability in settings with their non-disabled peers. This commitment was prompted by the belief that schools should be structured to support diversity, and that individuals with mental retardation and other severe disabilities are entitled to be part of the schools and communities where non-disabled individuals live and are educated. Almost every person interviewed provided specific examples of how inclusion "worked" in their school or district. These included anecdotes about how individual students had increased their abilities to communicate or how challenging behaviors quickly disappeared when students were engaged with non-disabled peers. In one instance, where a student's parents were reluctant to move him into a regular middle school, the school staff arranged for the student to visit the middle school classes for several days. The student did not want to return to his special school, and the parents are now considering making the change to the regular school.

While success stories abounded, district administrators still spoke of those few students who remain in special programs. Several hearing impaired students were not involved in inclusion at parental request, and students with serious emotional and behavior disorders were being carefully considered for return to their home schools, but remained in segregated schools or classrooms. The latter group of students posed greater problems for school districts in part because of their behaviors, but also because of the non-educational services they required. While not specifically elicited in the interviews, several of the school districts involved in this study are known to

be actively engaged in developing comprehensive school-linked service models that can provide the range of educational and support services to students with severe behavioral or emotional disorders and their families.

In summary, if one impression remains from the tone of the interviews, it is that special educators are pushing forward with inclusion because they believe it is the right thing to do. As noted earlier, all of those interviewed were strong proponents of inclusion and were involved voluntarily in implementing inclusion in their districts or schools. While individuals were not systematically asked why they believed in inclusion, some volunteered that they believed that students with severe disabilities had basic rights to be part of everyday life of the non-disabled, that they and their districts strongly supported diversity, and believed that inclusion was a model that could help many students. In addition, as noted earlier, anecdotal information about specific students clearly reinforces the notion that inclusion results in gains in communication and social adjustment. However, the core attitude appears to be rooted in social justice and equity of opportunity.

Because of these beliefs, district administrators did not appear to be stymied by lack of funds. If they can garner support from school boards and state education agencies, they put resources into it; but if new money is not readily available, they piece together funds to do what they can. The administrators did not necessarily view inclusion as a way to save money nor as a way to radically redefine special education. Nor did they stop the initiative because of lack of funds. In short, the effort can be as expansive as the funds available or as constrained as the budget, but creating inclusive schools will continue.

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Appendix

School Districts Participating in Interviews

Chicago Public Schools, IL

Educating over 400,000 students (4,000 in special education), the Chicago School District is one of the largest in the country. Noted for its efforts in site-based decisionmaking, the 578 schools in the district have created a number of inclusive schools, and have maintained a continuum of placements for students receiving special education services.

Fayetteville-Manlius Central School District, NY

A suburb of Syracuse, this district has 4,000 students with slightly over 300 students receiving special education services. Residents of this community are upper middle income families. The district has 3 elementary (K-4) schools, 2 middle (5-8) schools, and 1 high (9-12) school.

Indian Prairie School District, IL

Located in suburban Chicago, this district has 10,000 students (500 in special education) in 11 elementary schools (K-5), 3 middle schools, and 1 high school. All elementary students but five are fully included, full-time, full day. Students may be pulled out for 20 minutes (or as needed) for intensive skill development, while others may be going to supplemental classes such as computer classes.

Lake Washington School District, WA

A growing suburban community of Seattle, this school district enrolls 23,662 students (2,000 in special education). A districtwide commitment to inclusive

education is exemplified throughout its 24 elementary, 7 junior high, 4 senior high, and 3 alternative schools.

Montgomery County School District, VA

All 18 schools in this district have developed an inclusive approach to education. The district's 8,800 students (1,100 special education) represent a variety of communities ranging from very rural stable towns to a college community of fairly mobile families.

Roswell School District, NM

Roswell is New Mexico's fifth largest school district serving over 11,000 students (1,300 requiring special education services). Roswell has been committed to home school delivery of services and other inclusive practices for years.

Ruidoso School District, NM

All 5 schools in this district serve students in their home school and have developed a variety of inclusive and unified delivery practices. The district enrolls 2,200 students (350 in special education). The district is located in a popular tourist resort area.

Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union, VT

A small, rural district, Rutland serves 900 students in a cluster of five towns on the Vermont/New York border. Of the 110 students who receive special education services, 80 are served in the Supervisory Union's schools and 30 attend programs in other districts. While the vast majority of elementary students attend their local schools in inclusive settings, a portion of the high school students attend the Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) programs in New York that are more segregated in nature.

South Burlington School District, VT

A bedroom community to Burlington, this school district provides educational services to 2,000 students (140 special education) of rather high SES backgrounds. The district has 3 elementary schools, 1 middle school, and 1 high school and experiences very low staff turnover.

Weld County School District #6 (Greeley), CO

Twelve thousand students (1,200 special education) attend the 22 schools in Weld County School District. Schools are divided into pre K-5, 6-7, 8-9, and 10-12. Systemic reforms have resulted in all elementary and middle schools being inclusive. Some high schools have maintained the resource room model while others have become inclusive. The only students (27) in private placement are those who have been placed by Social and Youth Services.

Participating Schools by District

Representatives of three schools participated in the interviews. Their schools are located in two large school districts in Maryland (Montgomery County and Prince George's County), both of which have maintained a continuum of service models. Enrollment in each of these schools range from 350-550 students. Students receiving special education services have disabilities that include physical disabilities, learning disabilities, and behavior disorders.

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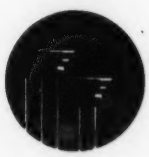

CSEF is part of the American Institutes for Research (AIR), Palo Alto, California